

## Arundhathi Subramaniam

### First Draft

It's just old fashioned, they say,  
to use pen and paper for first drafts

but I still need  
the early shiver of ink  
in a white February wind —

the blue slope and curve  
of letter  
    bursting into stream

the smudge of blind alley  
the retraced step, the groove  
of old caravan routes, the slow thaw

of glacier, the chasm that cannot be forded  
by image.

And I need reprieve, perhaps a whole season,  
before I arrive at that first inevitable chill

when a page I dreamt piecemeal  
in some many-voiced moon-shadowed thicket

flickers back at me  
in Everyman's handwriting

filaments of smell and sight  
cleanly amputated —  
Times New Roman, font size fourteen.

## Strategist

The trick to deal  
with a body under siege  
is to keep things moving,

to be juggler  
at the moment  
when all the balls are up in the air,  
a whirling polka of asteroids and moons,

to be metrician of the innards,  
calibrating the jostle  
and squelch of commerce  
in those places where blood  
meets feeling.

Fear.  
Chill in the joints,  
primal rheumatism.

Envy.  
The marrow igloos  
into windowlessness.

Regret.  
Time stops in the throat.  
A piercing fishbone recollection  
of the sea.

Rage.  
Old friend.  
Ambassador to the world  
that I am.

The trick is not to noun  
yourself into corners.  
Water the plants.  
Go for a walk.  
Inhabit the verb.